

further and further behind. For these families, a minimum wage increase is not a windfall, but a necessary step to allow them to attain a real "living wage." This uneven growth should concern us all in Congress.

The Clinton Administration's plan is to increase the current minimum wage of \$5.15 by \$0.50 in January 1999 and another \$0.50 a year later, resulting in a wage floor of \$6.15 in the year 2000. I support the proposal and would like to take a moment to put the proposed increase in context. If we do nothing, the minimum wage in the year 2000 would be equal to \$4.82, a level that cannot support a family. The administration proposal, if fully implemented in the year 2000, would result in a minimum wage of \$6.15 per hour. However, based on the inflation estimates of the Congressional Budget Office, that \$6.15 wage in the year 2000 would equal only \$5.72 in today's dollars.

The proposed increase would move the minimum wage back to the level of the early 1980s, before inflation was allowed to erode the real value of the minimum wage by 30 percent. Throughout the 1960s and much of the 1970s, the minimum wage was as much as a dollar above the current proposal. The fact is that the minimum wage increases in the 1990s, including the one currently under consideration, will only restore some of the lost ground and real earning power of America's lowest paid workers.

Despite the 1996 increase, the minimum wage remains below its real value from 1956 through 1983. And if no action is taken, its value will once again erode over time. From 1980 through 1995, inflation rose 86 percent, but the minimum wage increased by only 27 percent. As a result, working families fall further and further behind. Because of inflation, it now takes \$7.33 to buy what the minimum wage did in 1968. The current minimum wage of \$5.15 has nearly 30% less buying power than it did thirty years ago. That's unfair for low-income individuals, struggling to provide for themselves and their families.

Since the late 1970s, wage inequality has grown steadily. Wage inequality is the gap between those at the bottom, the middle of the wage scale and those earning the highest income. In 1996, the wealthiest one-fifth of the population, those whose earnings place them in the highest 20% of household earnings, collected 49% of all national income, an increase from 42.8 percent in 1968. By contrast, the share earned by the remaining 80 percent of all Americans declined. The decline in the real value of the minimum wage is a large part of this widening gap. By raising the minimum back to its 1979 level, we can help close the gap and ensure that low-wage workers get a fairer share of the economic growth. The minimum wage helps workers get their fair share of our economic growth and prosperity, raising wages for millions of workers across the country.

The 60-year-old Fair Labor Standards Act serves as our basic commitment to America's workers. FLSA was subsequently amended by the Pay Equity Act roughly thirty-five years ago, pledging equal pay for equal work. Of the 12 million workers who would benefit from an increase in the minimum wage, 60% are women. Pay equity is an important issue in the minimum wage debate.

Today, the median annual earnings for women is only 71% of a man's earnings, just 71 cents for each dollar. Expressed another way, the median annual income for women in 1995, less than \$22,500, was the male median earnings level of the early 1980s. We've all been through the 1980s and shouldn't be expected to go back.

After more than a decade of wage growth for most women, the bottom two-thirds of women in the workforce saw their wages decline between 1989 and 1995. At the same time, jobs have become less secure and less likely to offer health and pension benefits.

By increasing the minimum wage, we can provide strong support and raise family income for low income families across the country, helping to address widening income inequality for women, particularly single women raising children.

Who are minimum wage workers? They are men and women who operate airport metal detectors and X-ray machines at Los Angeles International airport are among those making the state's minimum wage of \$5.75 an hour. They receive no benefits, no sick days, and no vacation, and yet they protect the safety of millions of passengers who travel through the nation's second-busiest airport every year.

Minimum wage workers are disproportionately women, often single heads of households with children. The average minimum wage worker is responsible for providing more than half of his or her family's earnings. Working 40 hours a week, 52 weeks a year, a minimum wage worker earns \$10,712 a year, approximately \$2,900 below the poverty level for a family of three.

During the successful 1996 effort to increase the minimum wage, opposition in the business community argued the increase would trigger a loss of minimum wage jobs. However, recent studies suggest otherwise. A review of the 1996 minimum wage increase found the increase raised wages of almost 10 million workers. Approximately 71 percent of those were adults, with roughly half working full time, and another third worked 20 to 34 hours a week. The study found no impact on the level of jobs or inflation, but workers got the raise they deserve.

Contrary to Republican critics, the increases were well-targeted, disproportionately benefiting low-income working households. The poorest 20% of American households, those with an average income of \$15,728, received 35 percent of the benefits from the minimum wage increase. Raising the mini-

mum wage lifts family income for low-income workers, without the adverse effects and job loss claimed.

During the 1996 welfare reform debate, there was widespread support for the concept of "making welfare work." Raising the minimum wage is particularly important for those moving off welfare as a result of welfare reform. We need to make sure these workers are able to find work that enables them to make ends meet. Minimum wage workers are primarily adults, with more than half serving as their family's primary wage earner. Raising the minimum wage plays an important role in moving people from welfare assistance to supporting themselves and their family.

An Oregon study found that, following an increase in the state minimum wage, the average wage of an individual leaving welfare increased as well. By contrast, the average wage of an individual leaving welfare fell by 5 percent in the years prior to the increase. Nearly one-third who found work, and one-half of those finding part-time work, received the minimum wage. A strong minimum wage offers strong protection for low-income families and can assist them to make a successful transition from welfare to work.

Mr. President, by any measure, whether its education level or test scores, low-wage workers are equally if not more skilled than the workers of 20 years ago. These workers have more labor market experience, more education and have contributed to an expanding economy which has experienced overall labor productivity growth of 22 percent since 1979.

Yet today's minimum wage earner receives nearly 30% less buying power than they did thirty years ago. That's unfair for low-income individuals, struggling to provide for themselves and their families. Today, about 12 million workers earn the minimum wage. These low income workers deserve a share of the benefit. These workers deserve a raise. ●

A SALUTE TO GENERAL DANIEL SMITH

● Mr. FRIST. Mr. President, General Daniel Smith, a builder of civilization in the Tennessee Frontier, will be remembered at his home, Rock Castle in Hendersonville, Tennessee, on October 17, 1998 for his 250th birthday. As a licensed surveyor, Daniel Smith worked with Thomas Walker in 1781 to extend the state lines of North Carolina and Virginia to determine the boundary between the unsettled territories of the future Kentucky and Tennessee.

After serving as Captain in the Revolutionary War, he received a 3,140 acre land grant from North Carolina as payment for his surveying work and service during the Revolution. In 1784, Daniel Smith brought his family from Virginia to the North Carolina Territory that would become Tennessee. He served as Brigadier General of the

Metro District and Secretary of the Territory South of the River Ohio.

In 1784, Daniel Smith produced the first map of the "Tennessee Government." As chairman of the committee to draft a state constitution, he is credited with naming the State of Tennessee. He served twice as a United States Senator. I now yield to my colleague from Tennessee.

Mr. THOMPSON. Daniel Smith's many and great accomplishments are far too numerous to list in this venue, but are celebrated daily in the freedom of our Nation and the struggles of the early Westward movement. Thomas Jefferson wrote of Smith after his death:

For intelligence, well cultivated talents, for integrity, and usefulness, in soundness of judgement, in the practice of virtue and in shunning vice he was equaled by few men, and in the purity of motive, excelled by none.

As Tennessee's United States Senators, we salute the vision of General Daniel Smith. He saw the vast potential in this young nation's early Westward movement, and his love of Tennessee is an inspiration to us all. We are proud to follow in his footsteps in the United States Senate, and we join our fellow Tennesseans in remembering this proud statesman on the 250th anniversary of his birth.●

GRAND FORKS EXHIBITION

● Mr. CONRAD. Mr. President, I am here today to talk about a very special photo exhibit entitled "Come Hell and High Water," which is on display this week in the Rotunda of the Russell Senate Office Building.

Through some of the most amazing photographs I have ever seen, the exhibit poignantly tells the story of the residents throughout the Red River Valley of North Dakota and Minnesota who struggled through the most devastating of circumstances during the winter and spring of 1997.

From the most brutal winter in 50 years, which, when all was said and done, had dropped more than 100 inches of snow on the region; to the most significant flooding in recorded history that resulted in the Red River cresting 26 feet above flood stage at Grand Forks and forcing an evacuation of nearly all 50,000 residents in the middle of the night; to, when no one could imagine it getting any worse, the devastating fire that destroyed the heart of downtown Grand Forks; to the tremendous outpouring of assistance that brought hope from the Administration and organizations such as the American Red Cross, and the thousands of volunteers from throughout the United States; to the beginning of the recovery process, which continues to this day and will continue as the cities of Grand Forks and East Grand Forks rebuild bigger, better, and stronger than they were before these devastating events. Each of these 37 photographs is worth not only a thousand words, but

thousands of lives—the lives that were so greatly impacted by these events.

I am proud to say to my colleagues today that the City of Grand Forks has made tremendous strides in overcoming these seemingly insurmountable odds. The flood destroyed more than 800 homes in Grand Forks. Today, Grand Forks Homes, in partnership with several agencies and local lenders, have contracted to build 222 new homes in three new subdivisions. Fifty-four of these homes are complete, and 158 homes are in the framing stage. During the winter months, 287 families were housed in FEMA-provided mobile homes. Currently, only 119 mobile homes are occupied. Of the 41 historic downtown buildings destroyed by flood waters and 11 destroyed by fire, 20 properties have been acquired through the Central Business District Business Acquisition program, and 25 more have been targeted for buyout. The Business and Industry Disaster Assistance Program has committed more than \$1.5 million to 76 businesses to help provide for post-flood economic development. The Noah's Ark building, a 170,000 square foot office and industrial building that will provide new economic development opportunities for the community, is slated to be finished July 1st. The Corporate Center, composed of two buildings currently under construction in downtown Grand Forks, will house three larger businesses and will provide economic vitality to this area.

I commend the residents of Grand Forks for their strength, perseverance, and commitment to their wonderful community.

I would like to take this time to thank the exhibit sponsors: the Bremer Foundation of St. Paul and the Knight-Ridder Corporation of Miami, who have allowed this exhibit to be displayed at the Newseum, the U.S. Geological Survey, the Kennedy Center, and throughout the State of North Dakota.

Also, a special thank you to all the photographers who so dramatically captured the events, the lives, the emotions, and the heart of the Red River Valley.

I urge my colleagues to take the time to view this exhibit and begin to truly understand not only the devastation of the events of 1997, but more importantly, the resilience, the spirit, and the strength of the citizens of the Red River Valley.●

TRIBUTE TO MICHAEL E. STEPHENS

● Mr. SHELBY. Mr. President, I rise today to honor Mr. Michael E. Stephens, the founder of ReLife, Inc., a nation-wide rehabilitation system, and the namesake of the Michael E. Stephens College of Business at the University of Montevallo in Alabama. Mr. Stephens is a remarkable man, a distinguished citizen and a leader in the field of health care and physical rehabilitation.

Mr. Stephens was born and raised in Alabama and began attending the University of Montevallo in 1962. However, his path through college was a long, complicated one. Though Michael Stephens is today a highly successful entrepreneur, recognized for his many accomplishments and his generous civic spirit, his first attempt at college was incomplete! Instead, Mr. Stephens left the University in 1966 for a series of jobs in the insurance industry. Several years later, at the age of 26, he broke his neck in a horrible diving accident. Despite being told he would never walk again, with extensive rehabilitation—and steely determination—Michael Stephens overcame the most significant obstacle of his life. Amazingly, he fully recovered in less than a year, and almost ten years after he had begun his college education, Mr. Stephens returned to the University of Montevallo.

Michael Stephens received his undergraduate degree in business from the University of Montevallo in 1973 and his Master's Degree in 1975 from the University of Alabama at Birmingham. He went to work in rehabilitative services for the Lakeshore Rehabilitation Hospital. Based upon his own experience, Mr. Stephens was committed to providing comprehensive services and quality care to people with physical disabilities. Under his leadership, Lakeshore Hospital became a world-class rehabilitative center. By introducing new rehabilitative services, such as speech therapy, recreational programs, psychological counseling and outpatient job training, Mr. Stephens created a new way of dealing with disability. In fact, Forbes Magazine said, "Stephens turned little Lakeshore into a model laboratory for his idea about rehabilitation." In the mid-1980's, he founded the Lakeshore Foundation, a non-profit organization designed to assist people with physical disabilities. Specifically, the Foundation focused on training athletes. Almost overnight, Mr. Stephens' athletic program grew. Lakeshore's athletes went on to become among the most successful in the paralympics: breaking records in all events and winning numerous gold, silver and bronze medals. His successful approach to rehabilitation led to his founding of ReLife, a publicly-traded national health-services corporation, in 1986.

Through ReLife, Mr. Stephens realized his dream of reinventing rehabilitation. By 1992, ReLife ran over forty rehabilitation facilities. In 1994, when ReLife merged with HealthSouth Corporation, Michael Stephens focused his attention and considerable talents on other needs of his community. He became a member of the board of trustees of the Alabama Symphony Orchestra and the Naples, Florida Philharmonic Center for the Arts. Additionally, he is a former member of both the President's Committee on Hiring the Handicapped and the National Association of Rehabilitation Facilities and is active in the Alabama State Health Coordinating Council. Mr. Stephens' business